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National Technical Information Service

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PAN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION
EXCHANGE SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES,
HELD AT WASHINGTON, D.C. ON MARCH 15-26, 1976

PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES



PAN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION
EXCHANGE SEMINAR

Washington, D.C.
March 15-26, 1976



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Report

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5. Recommendations

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Co-Sponsors

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

National Technical Information Service (NTIS)

1. Purpose and Scope

The first Pan-American Environmental Information Exchange Seminar, organized by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), was held in Washington, March 15-26, 1976.

Latin American participants were information managers associated with environmental programs sponsored by PAHO, some with UNDP support. The centers represented also participate, or plan to participate, in the EPA International Documents Exchange. Information exchange arrangements between EPA and its counterpart agencies in Latin America are made through PAHO to assure coordination with on-going information systems development efforts. These bilateral arrangements for delivery of information supplement the referral services of UNEP/IRS. EPA, U.S. National Focal Point for UNEP/IRS, also provided a demonstration of the IRS computerized referral system.

Participants from the United States included EPA and NTIS staff responsible for the Seminar and invited speakers from other agencies and non-government information specialists. Appendix A lists the Seminar participants and Appendix B is the Seminar program.

The aim of the Seminar was to create a regional framework within which environmental centers in the Americas could share information resources. Specific objectives of the first meeting were:

- (a) to introduce Latin American countries to environmental information services in the United States which can be available through agreements and/or contracts.
- (b) to review the cooperative EPA-NTIS program both to illustrate the concept and operations of an environmental center utilizing the services of a central documents and information dissemination service, and to explain EPA/NTIS services available under the International Documents Exchange.
- (c) to provide a state of the art review of microtechnology as an advanced tool in information storage and retrieval and demonstration of equipment, including mini-computers, and
- (d) to draft guidelines for regional coordination of national environmental information systems and procedures for sharing services and products.

2. Topics

Chart 1 is a summary of the ten-day program which covered selected environmental information services in the United States, review of PAHO/UNDP assisted services being developed in Latin America, and discussions of needs and opportunities for regional cooperation.

PAN-AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE SEMINAR

CHART 1

First Week (March 15-19)		Topics	Location
March 15, Monday	9:00 10:30	Introduction Discussion of Seminar Aims	Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Room 1013 23rd and E Street, N.W. Washington, D.C.
	2:00	Review of Latin American Programs	
	9:00 2:00	National Technical Information Service (NTIS) Review of Latin American Programs (continued)	
March 16, Tuesday	9:00 2:00	NTIS (Site Visit) Afternoon Free	PAHO National Technical Information Service (NTIS) 5285 Port Royal Road Springfield, Virginia
	9:00	EPA Information Programs	
	2:00	EPA Library (Site Visit)	
March 17, Wednesday	10:00 2:00	Environment Information Center, Inc. Regional Centers Panel	EPA Room 2404
	10:00	Microtechnology Center Model A Description	
	2:00	3-M (Site Visit)	
March 18, Thursday	10:00 11:00	EPA International Documents Exchange UNEP/IRS Focal Point	3-M Corporation 1101 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.
	2:00	EPA Working Session	
	9:00	National Library of Medicine (Site Visit)	
March 19, Friday	1:30	NOAA Environmental Data Service	8600 Rockville Pike Bethesda, Maryland
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
Second Week (March 22-26)	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	3300 Whitehaven Street, N.W. Washington, D.C.
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
March 22, Monday	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	EPA - Room 3906
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
March 23, Tuesday	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	EPA - Room 3906
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
March 24, Wednesday	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	EPA - Room 3906
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
March 25, Thursday	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	EPA - Room 3906
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
March 26, Friday	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	EPA - Room 3906
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
March 27, Saturday	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	EPA - Room 3906
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	
March 28, Sunday	9:00	Library of Congress, National Referral Center	EPA - Room 3906
	10:00	Group Discussion	
	2:00	Summary and Recommendations	

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3. Needs

Throughout the Seminar discussions focused on management needs of the centers represented and opportunities for designing the newer Latin American systems according to a pattern that would encourage regional cooperation.

The group examined a number of thesauri, concluding that top priority should be given to a Spanish language environmental thesaurus. Common terminology is essential if the centers are to be part of a regional network. A master thesaurus, created cooperatively that could be adapted by each country to fit its own needs, would also be far less expensive than individual efforts.

Guidelines are needed for design and management of national systems as well as regionally shared services. Of particular importance are standard indexes and procedures for documents abstracting and processing. A central registry of Spanish translation of reports is also needed to avoid costly duplication. The possibility of a Latin American clearinghouse similar to NTIS was raised.

Training for information managers and user education are prerequisite to effective operation and use of information services. Emphasis was placed on the need for each center to identify prospective user groups and make special efforts to extend awareness of environmental information services to the non-technical community -- legislators, planners, journalists, citizens' groups.

4. Opportunities for Regional Cooperation

There is an urgent need to systematically pool information resources needed to solve environmental problems in the Western Hemisphere. All countries will benefit; first by providing environmental officials and researchers access to a large store of environmental information; secondly by improving the prospects of a cleaner environment throughout the area by rapid transfer of technological information from source to user.

Regional meetings held on a regular basis and rotating among the participating centers provide an opportunity for interagency cooperation on information systems design and management techniques.

Systematic exchange of documents, bibliographies, audio-visuals, computer tapes and other products will automatically enlarge the collections of all the participating centers.

Agreed upon terminology, indexing system, documents abstracting and processing procedures will lead to a regional network of national centers sharing information services.

Management training opportunities, on an in-service basis for personnel from other centers, will result in closer working relationships as well as provide training beyond that available at academic institutions.

5. Recommendations

Following are findings and recommendations drawn up by the Latin American participants with respect to their own needs and their relationship to PAHO and other United Nations assistance:

Considering that in Latin America:

- a. A systematic survey of information of great potential value produced in each country, is not available.
- b. The information available in each country is not processed in the same manner and in the same common technical language.
- c. The various library organizations follow different patterns in each individual country.
- d. The resources allocated for information aquisition, processing and dissemination are scarce and vary from country to country.
- e. External access to the Latin American collections is practically non-existent due primarily to lack of an efficient dissemination system.
- f. An urgent need to develop applied research projects optimizing the utilization of existing local resources.
- g. Imported technology does not always apply to local conditions and therefore it is absolutely necessary to develop a local technological base.

- h. The individual national research policies are not supported by a cooperative information effort.
- i. The interchange of information among countries is limited and not on a timely basis.
- j. The points mentioned above prevent effective communication among the centers.

It is recommended that:

- 1. An integrated Latin American System for the exchange of information related to the environment be established.
- 2. PAHO take the necessary steps to integrate a team of expert information specialists in order to develop the following:
 - a. Selection of a common terminology for environmental health (preparation and/or translation of a thesaurus or equivalent).
 - b. Selection of a common procedure for the interchange of information in Latin America (cataloging forms).
 - c. Selection of the best system for communication between Latin American countries on one side and the rest of the world on the other side (operational structure of the network).
 - d. Design of a model for the operation of the pilot center as a referral point for those institutions that eventually will participate in the network mentioned under c. This model must include a definition of the resources required, be they human, financial and technical as well as a critical planning and the economical impact thereof.

3. The Latin American information centers study the project prepared by the team, in order to reach a common agreement leading to its implementation on a prototype basis.
4. The international funding required (see 2d above) for the implementation of final project should be provided by organizations such as UNESCO, UNEP, PAHO, etc.

The group also recommended that Pan American Regional Seminars be continued on an annual basis to assure close cooperation among existing and planned environmental information centers. The next meeting, to be arranged by a Latin American center and to be open to other organizations in the hemisphere concerned with environmental information, should develop plans for a regional network under which management systems for information as well as technical information services can be shared.

APPENDIX A

PAN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION
EXCHANGE SEMINAR

- Participants -

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APPENDIX B

PAN -AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE SEMINAR

MONDAY, MARCH 15

9:00 - 10:00

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Welcome
- B. Introductions

10:00 - 10:30

-- COFFEE BREAK --

10:30 - 12:00

- C. Group Discussion on What Participants Hope to Gain from Seminar

12:00 - 2:00

-- LUNCH --

2:00 - 4:00

- D. General Review of Latin American Information Programs

TUESDAY, MARCH 16

9:00 - 12:00

II. NTIS ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION SERVICES

- A. "About NTIS"
- B. Access to NTIS
 - 1. Current Awareness Tools
 - 2. Specialized Packaging of Information
 - 3. Marketing Techniques
 - 4. Ordering Techniques
 - 5. Request Processing
- C. NTIS-EPA Cooperative Products and Services
 - 1. EPA Bibliographies
 - 2. In-Depth MF File
 - 3. Retrospective Search Techniques
 - 4. Terminal Access

TUESDAY, MARCH 16 (continued)

12:00 - 2:00

-- LUNCH --

2:00 - 4:00

D. Review of Latin American Programs
(continued from Monday)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17

9:00 - 12:00

III. NTIS (Springfield, Virginia Site Visit)

-- AFTERNOON FREE --

THURSDAY, MARCH 18

9:00 - 12:00

IV. EPA INFORMATION SYSTEMS

A. EPA Library Systems

B. EPA Information Centers

C. EPA Data Files

D. EPA Computer Software Packages

12:00 - 2:00

-- LUNCH --

2:00 - 4:00

V. EPA LIBRARY (Site Visit)

FRIDAY, MARCH 19

10:00 - 12:00

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTER, INC.

12:00 - 2:00

-- LUNCH --

2:00 - 4:00

VII. REGIONAL CENTERS PANEL

SATURDAY, MARCH 20

(Optional)

Special Libraries Association -- Joint
Spring Workshop

SUNDAY, MARCH 21

-- FREE --

MONDAY, MARCH 22

10:00 - 12:00

VIII. MICROTECHNOLOGY CENTER MODEL

A. Description

12:00 - 2:00

-- LUNCH --

2:00 - 4:00

B. 3-M Site Visit

TUESDAY, MARCH 23

10:00 - 11:00

IX. EPA INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS EXCHANGE

A. Procedures

B. Problems

C. Future Plans

11:00 - 12:00

X. UNEP/IRS NATIONAL FOCAL POINT

12:00 - 2:00

-- LUNCH --

2:00 - 4:00

XI. EPA WORKING SESSION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24

9:00 - 11:30

XII. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE (Site Visit)

11:30 - 1:30

-- LUNCH --

1:30 - 4:00

XIII. NOAA ENVIRONMENTAL DATA SERVICES (Site Visit)

THURSDAY, MARCH 25

10:00 - 12:00

XIV. GROUP DISCUSSION

- A. Environmental Information Management Needs
- B. Opportunities for Regional Cooperation
- C. Training Needs
- D. Translation Services

12:00 - 2:00

-- LUNCH --

2:00 - 4:00

XV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FRIDAY, MARCH 26

9:00 - 11:30

XVI. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, NATIONAL REFERRAL CENTER (Site Visit)

END OF SEMINAR